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ERIC SEVAREID

SEVAREID SPEAKS OUT

Eric Sevareid, the CBS-TV commentator, believes that the three major networks in this country should be more careful in granting the President of the U.S. free air time whenever he demands it.

In an interview with reporter Dave Kaufman of Daily Variety, the show business trade paper, Sevareid explained that he was not only referring to Nixon but to past U.S. Presidents as well.

Sevareid contends that some Presidential requests for nationwide network coverage are not particularly meritorious.

"When Agnew talks about monopoly," he asks, "who has a monopoly like the President? It's not the power of the press, but the power of the Government, and with that the power of the Presidency."

The CBS commentator feels strongly that the three networks erred in covering Spiro Agnew's Des Moines speech in which the Vice President vehemently denounced critics of the Nixon Administration.

"Agnew, Herbert Klein, the White House Director of Communications, and a speechwriter named Buchanan who wrote it," Sevareid declares, "are professional propagandists who accused us of being propagandists. I feel as though a pail of garbage had been thrown at me. I've been in the business 30 years. Suddenly all this mud is thrown at me. Agnew singled out only critics of the Administration. Those friendly to it were not mentioned.

"What Nixon did through Agnew was what President Johnson once said to me he would never do--wrap the flag around him to silence his critics. Johnson told me he could drive the boys off the cliff if he wanted to, but he didn't....

"...Klein has said publicly, 'You in TV should examine yourselves, or the Government will come in.' It's incredible. Here is a former newspaperman making a statement like this. Has he never read the Constitution?...No network newsman would be allowed to use the invectives and epithets Agnew did."